

RV BUSINESS

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APRIL 1986 \$2.00



**WILL FALLING PRICES
PUMP UP RV SALES?**

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A 12 ENTERTAINMENT PUBLICATION

APRIL 1986/VOLUME 17 NUMBER 4

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ON THE COVER: As the travel season approaches, RVers are pleasantly surprised to see old-time gasoline prices on today's pumps. Prices as low as 88 cents per gallon have been reported as of presstime, and it's anybody's guess where they will bottom out. Analysts and industry members speak out as to how they believe it will affect the RV business, beginning on page 32. Gas pump supplied by Petroleum Dynamics Incorporated. Photo by Paul Pribble.

Perspective

An analysis of RVB's monthly survey
of its Dealer Advisory Board Members
GAYLORD MAXWELL

	NEW						USED					
	FOR MONTH			YEAR-TO-DATE			FOR MONTH			YEAR-TO-DATE		
	JAN '86	JAN '85	% CHANGE	1986	1985	% CHANGE	JAN '86	JAN '85	% CHANGE	1986	1985	% CHANGE
MOTORHOMES	99	86	+ 15%	99	86	+ 15%	57	73	- 22%	57	73	- 22%
TRAVEL TRAILERS	70	44	+ 59%	70	44	+ 59%	52	44	+ 18%	52	44	+ 18%
TRUCK CAMPERS	14	10	+ 40%	14	10	+ 40%	4	4	same	4	4	same
CAMPING TRAILERS	72	74	- 3%	72	74	- 3%	13	6	+ 116%	13	6	+ 116%
FIFTH-WHEELS	23	20	+ 15%	23	20	+ 15%	5	8	- 38%	5	8	- 38%

	FOR MONTH			YEAR-TO-DATE		
	JAN '86	JAN '85	% CHANGE	1986	1985	% CHANGE
SALES VOLUME	\$6,885,252	\$6,466,787	+ 6%	\$6,885,252	\$6,466,787	+ 6%
TOTAL UNIT SALES	409	369	+ 10%	409	369	+ 10%
NEW UNIT SALES	278	234	+ 19%	278	234	+ 19%
USED UNIT SALES	131	135	- 3%	131	135	- 3%

If January sales for RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB) are an accurate indicator of what RV sales will be in 1986, then the industry should rejoice. It was a decidedly up month in both dollars taken and in unit sales.

In new-unit sales, four of the five RV categories showed increases over last January. Used units didn't fare quite as well, but the drop was slight. DAB dealers ran up more dollars, too. A 6 percent increase isn't earthshaking; however, the fact that it is better than last January is reason for optimism.

Not all DAB members reported positively. In fact, one large multitype dealer reported the poorest month in three years. Eight others reported sales down from the previous January.

All sales volume decreases, however, did not mean corresponding decreases in gross profits. For example, one large motorhome specialist reported a decrease of \$300,000 in sales, but no drop in gross profits. Profit ratings were in the fair to good ranges, but every category got at least one excellent rating.

Used-unit sales were down slightly from last January, primarily due to a sharp drop in sales by three DAB members who specialize in motorized units.

The combination of more unit sales, more dollars taken in and a good gross profit picture at the dealer level—coupled with lower oil prices and a growing economy—are factors that strongly suggest this will be a good year.

MOTORHOMES

With one exception, most multitype dealers who stock motorhomes did about the same as last January in new-unit sales. The exception wholesaled a closed-out line, which inflated his sales figures for the month. Among the large specialists, no one increased sales over last year and a couple of them reported decreases, one of them dramatic. Overall, however, motorhome dealers on the DAB more than held their own.

Profits were generally reported good.

TRAVEL TRAILERS

Dealers of travel trailers had more than their share of problems last year. We are hopeful that the excellent increase over last January in new-unit sales presages a change from the difficulties encountered in '85.

Most dealers on the DAB shared in the upswing. Of the 19 who stock this RV type, only 4 fell below last year's January new-unit sales tally. No one had an explanation for the turnaround. Used units moved better than they did last January, too.

Profit ratings were equally divided between fair and good.

TRUCK CAMPERS

Only our camper specialist on the DAB reported new-unit sales for the month, and they were up considerably from last year. Used units were the same as last January.

Profits on new units were rated excellent.

CAMPING TRAILERS

The two-unit drop in new sales from last January is not significant; however, of the five RV types measured here, it is the only one with a decrease from last year. DAB dealers who deal heavily in this type reported mixed results.

The huge percentage increase in used is based on too few units to be very meaningful, but the fact that nine dealers sold used fold-downs this year vs. only four last year suggests that more dealers are taking them in trade.

Profits were very mixed.

FIFTH-WHEELS

After a struggle that left new fiver sales the leading loser among all RV types in our report last year, a 15 percent increase in new-unit sales looks good to start out the new year. The numbers are small, but the profits were good.

The large percentage drop in used units is based on too few units to be significant. Δ

Perspective is a compilation of data provided by RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB), a group comprised of 23 dealers representing a cross-section of the U.S. dealer body. This report is an attempt to reflect the current retail sales picture; it does not purport to indicate RV production or factory sales to dealers.

RVIA, JANUARY

The marketing committee of the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association has announced that the total number of recreational vehicles shipped from manufacturers' plants during January 1986 was 32,200 units, up 11.4% from January 1985.

The shipment figures released by the association are contained in a report compiled for the membership by RVIA's marketing committee under the chairmanship of Allen Yoder Jr. of Jayco Incorporated, Middlebury, Indiana.

RV shipments were as follows in Jan. 1986		Jan. 1985	Percent Change	Cumulative 1986	Cumulative 1985	Percent Change
TRAVEL TRAILERS	5,400	4,500	+ 26.0%	5,400	4,500	+ 20.0%
PARK MODELS	800	500	+ 60.0%	800	500	+ 60.0%
FIFTH-WHEELS	2,100	1,600	+ 31.3%	2,100	1,600	+ 31.3%
TRUCK CAMPERS	400	400	0	400	400	0
MULTI-USE VEHICLES	15,100	13,400	+ 12.7%	15,100	13,400	+ 12.7%
TYPE A: MOTOR-HOMES	2,500	3,200	- 21.9%	2,500	3,200	- 21.9%
TYPE B: VAN CAMPERS	600	500	+ 20.0%	600	500	+ 20.0%
TYPE C: MINI MOTOR-HOMES	1,800	2,200	- 18.2%	1,800	2,200	- 18.2%
FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS	3,500	2,600	+ 34.6%	3,500	2,600	+ 34.6%
TOTALS	32,200	28,900	+ 11.4%	32,200	28,900	+ 11.4%

WDA QUARTERLY SALES FIGURES

RV Business publishes a quarterly report of sales statistics from the Warehouse Distributors Association (WDA). The chart shown here is based upon a representative sampling of WDA members, as compiled in the fourth quarter of 1985. While these statistics are not intended to be fully indicative of the sales volume among distributors in the RV and MH industries, they are presented here as an insight into the supplier/distributor industry.

SALES VOLUME

FOURTH-QUARTER SALES VOLUME		
	PERCENT CHANGE 1984 to 1985	RANGE OF CHANGE
REGION 1	+ 11.9%	+ 28.3% to - 31.4%
REGION 2	+ 23.1%	+ 32.4% to - 2.6%
REGION 3	- 1.0%	+ 36.2% to - 30.0%
REGION 4	- 4.0%	+ 40.9% to - 38.7%
REGION 5	+ 3.1%	+ 24.7% to - 36.0%
REGION 6	+ 27.1%	+ 57.6% to - 3.2%

Region 1: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia and Washington, D.C.; **Region 2:** Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, and Tennessee; **Region 3:** Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin; **Region 4:** Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Texas; **Region 5:** Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming; **Region 6:** Canada.



TOW VEHICLES FOR '88

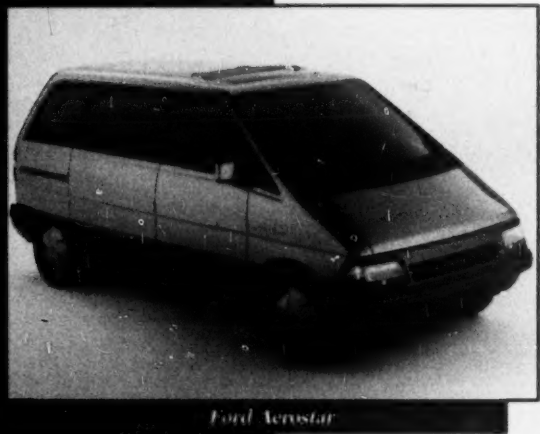
The Ford light truck line, including the Bronco, is due for redesign on '87 models



Jeep J-10



GMC Safari



Ford Aerostar

This year's bid for customers offers choices from sporty mini pickups to full-size vans—even a \$50,000 luxury 4WD

ELLIS TRANTOR

New models, new styles, new power—these are the driving forces behind the expected growth in light-truck popularity during the next five years. RVers interested in tow vehicles are certain to be attracted by what they see, and they will see them everywhere and in nearly every automotive manufacturer's lineup.

FORD TRUCKS

Ford is bringing out a new F-series of full-size pickups this fall, as well as a more modern Bronco built on the same chassis. The Bronco will also share components with the F-series.

The '87 Ford pickups will feature new grilles, new bumpers, new tailgates and other styling changes. Inside, they'll have upgraded instrument panels, and new seats and trim. Overall, the trucks will look more modern, but enough sheet metal is being continued to make them look familiar to longtime truck buyers. Appearance changes won't be as radical as in 1980.

The biggest news for RVers is in the engine/powertrain improvements. The base 4.9-liter six-cylinder engine—standard in the Bronco, Econoline Van and Club Wagon, and full-size pickups—is being fuel injected. Its current horsepower will increase by about 15 percent (exact numbers aren't final yet). Torque will increase by 5-10 percent over the current 250 lb-ft at 2000 rpm. And fuel economy will improve by at least 10 percent, according to company estimates.

Equally dramatic will be Ford's fuel injection of its big 7.5-liter V-8 engine in January '87. That engine is used in large pickups, stripped chassis and Econoline vans—all Ford light trucks, in fact, exceeding 8500 pounds gross vehicle weight rating (gvwr). Current horsepower is expected to increase from 245 to approximately 275 horsepower (hp). Fuel economy will increase by about 15 percent.

The company has not had any complaints about the power of the engine as

continued on page 49



Pontiac's futuristic concept vehicle is in the works for '89.

TRUCK SALES OUTLOOK

Light trucks are becoming "must" vehicles for an increasing number of people, particularly RVers. They offer the roominess and towing capability fading in cars, and a flexibility and durability uniquely their own. New models being introduced are heavily biased toward traditional car luxury and comfort, making the switch to trucks that much easier.

General Motors, in fact, predicts that throughout the next three to four years, several hundred thousand more people will switch from cars to pickups, vans and sport utility vehicles, continuing a trend that's been going on for some time. Fuel economy standards alone are limiting the number of traditional big cars Detroit can build, and pushing people into trucks.

Currently, Detroit manufacturers are only building about 800,000 rear-drive full-size cars. Their production, at one time, ran into the millions. Consider that in 1979, Ford had five plants building big Fords and Mercurys, whereas today, it has one. That has been a general kind of trend throughout the industry.

Ford is only turning out a little more than 250,000 of its rear-drive standard-size cars, and another 125,000 of its big Lincoln Town cars. Meanwhile, GM is down to about 425,000 of the full-size rear-drive models still left in its lineup. They include big Chevys and Pontiacs, the Cadillac Brougham and station wagon versions of the big Olds and Buick.

Meanwhile, manufacturers keep bumping up their ability to build trucks. In 1987, Chrysler is dropping its intermediate-size rear-drive cars from where they're currently built, to make room for more Caravan/Voyager production.

It may be the end of the Dodge Diplomat and Plymouth Gran Fury, but

Chrysler's minivan-building capability will soar to 300,000 yearly. This spring, the Ford Division will start producing about 100,000 more Ranger pickups yearly, and expects to sell more trucks than cars this year. AMC will be able to build more Jeeps this year and Chrysler more pickups.

Last year, almost 4.5 million light trucks were sold compared to 3.9 million the year before, according to Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association and individual company reports.

After several years of strong auto industry sales, the market is starting to taper off. But, even if truck sales don't exceed last year's levels, the ratio of trucks to cars sold is expected to continue increasing.

Full-size pickup truck demand is expected to be off this year because of the continuing popularity of smaller pickups. The decline is expected in the lower half-ton segment where buyers are most likely to switch over to compact pickups, which have almost as much power and very attractive prices. Jeep's Cherokee, which came out last fall, and Chrysler's new Dakota, due this fall—along with more powerful V-6 Nissan models, etc.—are all having some effect on half-ton conventional pickups.

Three-quarter and one-ton demand is expected to hold steady, particularly in view of declining fuel prices. All of the big trucks, in fact, will benefit from attractive fuel prices.

Overall, manufacturers sold about 1,283,000 full-size pickups last year, and that will drop by about 50,000 or more in 1986.

Full-size pickup demand will likely stay fairly stable during the next several years. Aside from fuel prices, the newly restyled Ford and GM pickups, with their better economy and power (see accompanying story), will help

give a lift to this market segment.

Compact pickups, helped by heavy competition that has held their prices down, should equal last year's levels, unless there is a serious drop in the overall market. A little more than 1.3 million were sold last year with just about everyone except Mazda, turning in record sales. (Mazda was getting rid of some old models, and bringing in newly restyled ones, which threw it off its pace.)

The low-rate financing, buying incentives and low prices (starting at a little more than \$6000) have been important to the success of small pickups. And Detroit executives expect them to continue because of heavy competition among manufacturers and their desire to keep production lines humming at full tilt.

There's little growth left in small pickups in the future, though, because every manufacturer who wanted to get into this market is already there (except Chrysler, which has only had Mitsubishi pickups to sell so far). Every style of small pickup that can be offered—from 2WD and 4WD to short- and long-wheelbase units to regular and extended-cab models—is already available.

For many people, small pickups have been simply low-cost transportation. About 40 percent of the two-wheel-drive models are sold in the low price range. To some degree, they will have to compete with less expensive cars from eastern Europe and Korea.

The most exciting prospects lie in minivans and compact sport utilities. Near term, minivans have the upper-hand. Further down the road, though, compact sport utilities are expected to seriously challenge them as more new four-door models from Detroit, and more high-tech and high-comfort Jap-

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TOW VEHICLES

from page 47

it is now. Insiders describe the upgraded engine as an awesome performer, but, overall, Ford is trying to bias the engine more toward fuel economy than power to meet future economy regulations.

Both Ford engines will get multiport fuel injection (one injector for each cylinder) with all the typical benefits of that system, including better emissions, quicker starts and smoother operation under different engine and outside temperatures.

A major appeal for safety-minded RVers will also be the new anti-lock braking system, an industry first for light trucks, which Ford plans to standardize on big pickups, Bronco and Bronco II this fall. These are basically two-wheel systems that will control rear braking. Essentially, anti-lock systems help prevent a truck from going into a skid or out of control during emergency braking or on slippery roads. They'll be added to other Ford trucks in the future.

Truck prices are expected to go up a bit, but some of the cost will be absorbed because of the quantities in which Ford is buying these systems and by the number of truck buyers it expects the system to convert to its ranks.

The new pickups and Bronco will also have other functional improvements, such as redesigned caster/camber to improve wheel-alignment control.

GENERAL MOTORS TRUCKS

GM, on the other hand, is going in for a much more dramatic effect, slimming its 1987 pickups down by 500-700 pounds. They are scheduled to go on sale about six months after Ford's. The new trucks are just as roomy as previous models, but have the round, sloping kind of aerodynamic look already seen on cars. Company insiders point out that, with today's technology, you don't need a big, massive-looking truck to have durability and strength. Fuel economy will improve by 2 or 3 mpg from weight reduction alone.

GM plans to upgrade its 1987 truck engines with fuel injection. It now has single-point (only one or two injectors where the carburetor used to be) on some models. Examples are the 2.5-liter 4-cylinder Astro/Safari vans and Chevy S-10/GMC S-15, the 2.8-liter V-6 in Chevy S-10/GMC S-15 pickups and the 4.3-liter V-6 in Chevy El Camino/GMC Caballero and Astro/Safari.



Jeep's Wrangler is due sometime this spring.



VW's Vanagon Camper Syncro is also expected this spring.



Pinzgauer's \$50,000 luxury offroadier is due this summer.



GM plans at least one 4WD model van within four years.

In 1987, all GM engines in trucks less than 10,000 pounds gvwr will be fuel injected, including the 5.0-liter V-8, the 5.7-liter V-8 and the 7.4-liter V-8. On trucks exceeding 10,000 pounds gvwr, the 5.7-liter and 7.4-liter V-8. On trucks exceeding 10,000 pounds gvwr, the 5.7-liter and 7.4-liter V-8s will continue being carbureted.

Generally, torque and horsepower on the new engines will increase, but exactly how much hasn't been determined yet. Changes in the camshaft and exhaust systems will affect horsepower and torque ratings.

Drivability and fuel economy will improve. Economy improvements in the engine (aside from those gained in lightening the vehicle) of 2-5 percent are anticipated. Serviceability will improve with the simplification of such things as hoses and controls. Engine performance, particularly in high-altitude areas such as Denver, will also improve.

GM also plans to offer anti-lock braking systems, if not immediately with the introduction of its new trucks then shortly afterward. Although the systems are available, they have never been mass produced. GM, which is currently shopping companies and comparing costs for the systems, wants to make sure they're safe, troublefree and not too pricey for consumers.

Although the Chevy Blazer and GMC Jimmy share componentry with the big pickups, they won't get big styling changes or trimmer bodies in 1987. As indicated, engines and powertrains, and other functional changes will be made, but a major restyling is further down the road.

NISSAN MINIVANS

Fueling the popularity of minivans are the many new entries on the way. Nissan, for example, plans a rear-drive seven-passenger minivan by the end of 1986. Similar in size to Toyota's, it will be available only in a passenger model.

CHEVROLET/PONTIAC MINIVANS

In 1989, Chevrolet and Pontiac will offer new, passenger-model-only, front-drive, plastic-bodied minivans. They'll be very sportily styled and may offer a new aluminum engine. An aluminum V-6, in fact, is a distinct possibility within the next couple of years. Officials plan to sell approximately a quarter-million of the new vans yearly.

Astro-Safari vans will continue being

TOW VEHICLES

continued

popular with RVers, though, because of their greater suitability for towing.

CHRYSLER/DODGE MINIVANS

Look for 1½-foot longer versions of Caravan and Voyager in mid- to late-1987, providing extra legroom and luggage area, which is a bit cramped in current seven- and eight-passenger models. They will offer a more powerful Mitsubishi-imported V-6, and greater towing ability.

A smaller and more narrow Chrysler-built minivan is also in the works for 1988. It basically will be a people-carrier, sporting the pillarless styling now seen on the Nissan Sentra wagon.

FORD/LINCOLN-MERCURY MINIVANS

Ford, of course, is going to match its competitors with a new front-drive minivan of its own. It will be narrower than the current Aerostar, and will be offered in both Ford and Lincoln-Mercury styles. It's due in about four years.

AMC VAN

Not one to be left out, American Mo-

CALENDAR YEAR LIGHT-TRUCK SALES

Retail deliveries by Detroit and Importers

	1985	1984	1983	1982	1981	1980
COMPACT PICKUPS	1,328,000	1,144,000	913,000	774,000	509,000	518,000
SEDAN PICKUPS*	24,000	26,000	26,000	25,000	37,000	50,000
FULL-SIZE PICKUPS	1,283,000	1,211,000	1,019,000	972,000	990,000	1,094,000
COMPACT VANS	478,000	257,000	31,000	13,000	11,000	13,000
CLASS C MOTORHOME CHASSIS	56,000	52,000	39,000	28,000	23,000	25,000
FULL-SIZE VANS	473,000	488,000	478,000	371,000	308,000	324,000
COMPACT SPORT UTILITIES	539,000	429,000	247,000	42,000	33,000	50,000
CLASS A CHASSIS, WALK-IN VANS**	52,000	60,000	48,000	33,000	27,000	19,000
OFFROAD STATION WAGONS***	95,000	86,000	69,000	55,000	38,000	39,000
REGULAR SPORT UTILITIES****	137,000	132,000	106,000	88,000	77,000	111,000
TOTAL	4,465,000	3,885,000	2,976,000	2,401,000	2,053,000	2,243,000

* Sedan pickups include Chevy El Camino, GMC Caballero.

** Also referred to as "Forward Controls" vehicle group.

*** Offroad station wagons include Chevy/GMC Suburbans and Jeep Grand Wagoneer.

**** Regular sport utilities include vehicles such as Ford Bronco, Dodge Ramcharger and Chevy Blazer.

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TOW VEHICLES

continued

tors has been looking for a foreign company to build a van for it. The Espace van, which AMC planned to bring in from Renault, is just about a dead issue because it couldn't be brought in at an attractive enough price to compete in the United States. Company officials admit to combing Asian countries, such as Japan and Korea, for a van to import.

VARIOUS 4WD VANS

On top of the 2WD vans, 4WD models are also going to be coming out. Nissan's Stanza Wagon and Volkswagen's new Vanagon Syncro, which are both due to go on sale this spring, are already in the 4WD van market.

Detroit manufacturers such as Chrys-

These "ditch jumpers and stump pullers" are expected to become as popular as minivans.

ler and Ford, which both have test models running around, are still evaluating potential demand. GM sources say there's a definite place for "traction control" vans, geared to family safety in all weather conditions. At least one 4WD GM van is expected within the next four years.

VOLKSWAGEN VANS

The Volkswagen Syncro will carry a starting price of \$15,315. Normally, a 4WD system costs a couple of thousand dollars, but VW decided to sell only luxury Syncros in the beginning.

Aside from the GL version, there are Camper and GL Camper versions as well. The Syncro Camper, VW believes, will be the most popular of the three. VW is still feeling its way around the market, and only plans to bring in about 500-1000 Syncros to test the market this year.

The Syncro is about 300 pounds heavier and an inch higher than the regular Vanagon. It has bigger wheels and a larger gas tank. Its four-wheel-drive system is full time. It grabs hold whenever the rear wheels start slipping or starts turning 6 percent faster than the front wheels (or vice versa.)

OFFROAD SPORT UTILITIES

These "ditch jumpers and stump pullers," as they're sometimes jokingly re-

Trailer tires

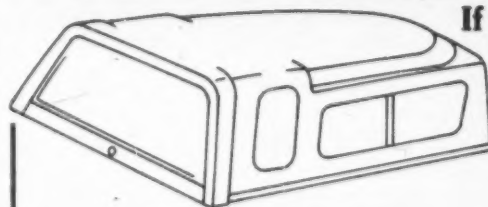
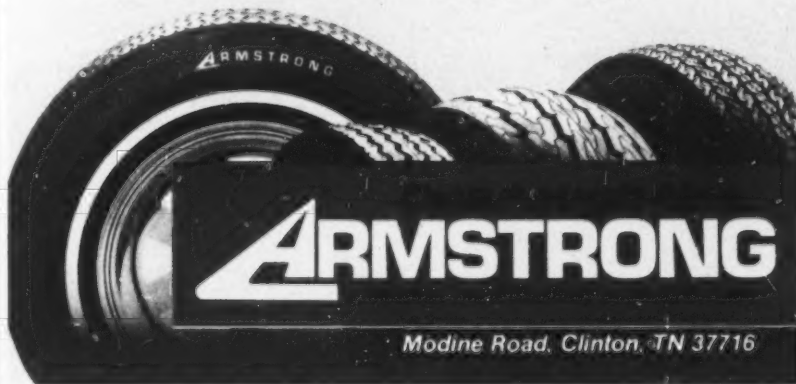
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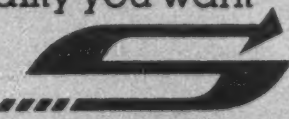
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TOW VEHICLES

continued

ferred to by the people who build them, are expected to become as popular as minivans in a few years.

Probably, the biggest thing driving their popularity will be the new four-door compact versions of Bronco II and Chevy S10-Blazer expected by 1989. They will solve what has been the offroad vehicle owner's biggest gripe: having to crawl into and back out of the rear seat.

Right now, the only four-door compact offroader is Jeep's Wagoneer, and it has been so successful that Jeep keeps raising its sales sights.

Some of the Japanese offroad vehicles are a bit too rough-and-tumble for the

*Some Japanese
offroad vehicles are
too rough-and-
tumble for the
average driver.*

average driver. As they are redesigned for more comfort, and as additional new models are brought in, they will broaden the market as well.

Currently, Mitsubishi sells Montero, and Chrysler plans to bring in a version of that Japanese vehicle this fall. Nissan also confirmed plans to bring in a totally new, not-yet-sold-anywhere, compact sport utility by the end of '86. It will feature the routine kinds of things—a part-time 4WD system, two-door design and V-6 engine—but is also expected to be tailored to United States comfort.

Aside from the Montero and the Toyota 4Runner, the Suzuki Samurai, introduced late last year, is still growing in popularity. And American Motors has a new Wrangler replacement for its discontinued CJ going on sale this spring. It has the "shift-on-the-fly" capability of other Jeep models, a tuned, smooth suspension and the 2.5-liter fuel-injected four-cylinder and optional 4.2-liter six-cylinder. It will be offered with a soft top and half-metal doors and in a hard-top model with full-metal doors.

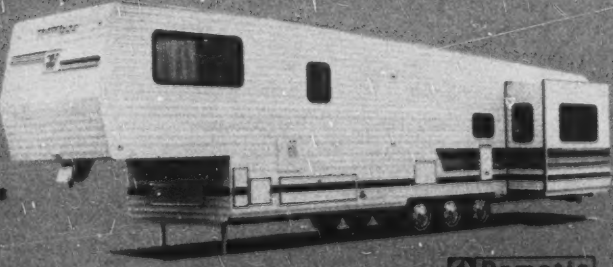
The Europeans are also slating luxury offroad vehicles in the larger end of the market. A new Austrian-built Pinzgauer, for example, will go on sale in the East, beginning this summer and in California by summer of '87.

Expected to retail for \$50,000, the five-passenger 4WD vehicle is built for speed and comfort, has a short 94.5-inch wheelbase, a 110-hp engine, is 176.3 inches in length and hits top speed at 80 mph. It has a tow rating of 5000 pounds onroad and 1500 pounds off-



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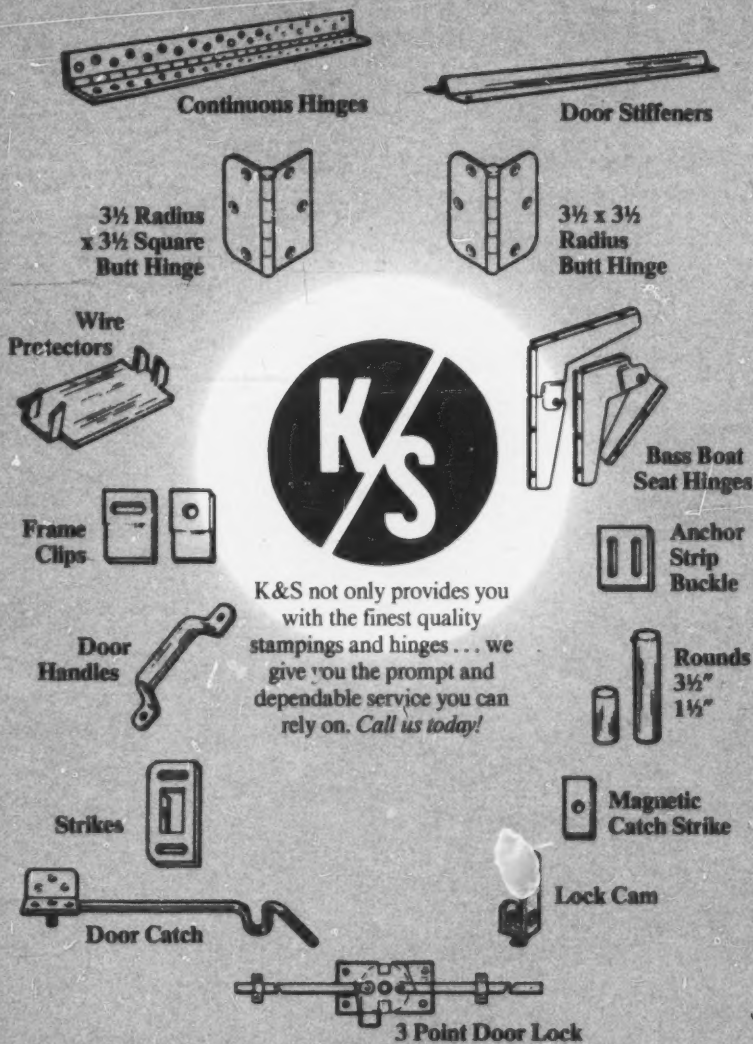
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TOW VEHICLES

continued

road; officials aren't sure why. It is powered by a six-cylinder turbodiesel engine, and will come with features such as a four-speed automatic transmission, air conditioning and self-leveling suspension.

In the 1987 model year, the English-built Ranger Rover will also go on sale for well in excess of \$30,000. It features a 3.5-liter aluminum V-8 engine; tow ratings are not yet available. Δ

TRUCK SALES

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anese models, begin arriving.

Last year, manufacturers sold about 540,000 compact sport utilities. Their popularity is expected to grow at a moderate rate this year. Chrysler plans to bring in about 10,000-12,000 Pajeros from Mitsubishi, beginning in the fall, to compete against the Bronco II and S-Blazer. Pajero is equivalent to the Montero sold by Mitsubishi dealers in this country. Nissan also has a new compact offroader due within the next 12 months.

Meanwhile, about 480,000 people bought minivans last year, and that's expected to climb by another 150,000 this year. About 350,000 of last year's minivans were passenger (as opposed to cargo) models. GM anticipates that passenger-minivan sales will reach upward of 750,000 within the next five to eight years.

Big vans haven't really been hurt by the growing popularity of the minis, so far. But their sales may drop by 50,000-80,000 this year because of increased availability of the Chevy Astro/GMC Safari and Ford Aerostar. Close to half of GM's compact vans and roughly a third of Ford's Aerostars are sold as commercial vans. That is how the bulk of full-size vans are sold. (Commercial refers to cargo carriers with only two seats.) So, competition between minis and full-size models is increasing.

Last year, the industry sold about 475,000 full-size vans, approximately 15,000 fewer than in the year before. Their popularity will taper off a bit during the next several years. As more new people-carrier-type minivans come on the market, models such as Astro and Safari will increasingly have to compete with large vans for commercial sales. They are expected to continue as favorites with the RV community, though, because of the advantages of rear-drive over front-drive for towing purposes.

The offroad station wagons, Chevy and GMC Suburbans and Jeep Grand Wagoneer, have climbed steadily in

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TRUCK SALES

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popularity during the last five years, reaching almost 100,000 sales in 1985. That's a tribute to their four-door roominess and tremendous towing and offroad capabilities. Their sales are expected to continue very strong. For RVing purposes, they can't be matched.

Full-size offroaders—such as Bronco, Blazer and Ramcharger—are expected to drop in popularity, even though Bronco and Ramcharger, for example, enjoyed increases last year. Originally, the auto companies thought their small offroaders would knock out the big ones. That hasn't happened, but Chrysler is starting to build its Ramcharger in Mexico at a slower pace than in the United States. And some of the military sales, which boosted Chevrolets' numbers, are likely to end when its current contract expires.

Sedan pickups, including the Chevy El Camino and GMC Caballero, have been very stable in the 25,000 sales range throughout the past four years.

Industry estimates for Class C and Class A motorhomes and walk-in vans reflect the Class C's growing popularity. They also show a slight falloff in Class A shipments from Detroit. Δ —E.T.



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